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ZNY CCCCC ZZH
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FM AMEMBASSY BISHKEK
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1350
INFO RUCNCLS/ALL SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA COLLECTIVE
RUCNCIS/CIS COLLECTIVE
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 2653
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC
RUEKJCS/OSD WASHDC
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 1028
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE 3042
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 2427
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO BRUSSELS BE
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS
RUEHLMC/MILLENNIUM CHALLENGE CORP
RUMICEA/USCENTCOM INTEL CEN MACDILL AFB FL

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BISHKEK 000938

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR SCA/CEN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/10/2018

TAGS: PGOV PREL PINR KG

SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR MEETS WITH FORMER FM IMANALIYEV

REF: BISHKEK 907

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Classified By: Ambassador Tatiana C. Gfoeller for Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary: Ambassador met September 11 with former Foreign Minister Muratbek Imanaliyev to discuss Kyrgyzstan's foreign policy. Imanaliyev claimed to be confident that Kyrgyzstan would continue its multi-vectoral foreign policy, but acknowledged that everything would have to be re-calculated following Russia's actions in Georgia. For the years after independence, Imanaliyev said that the other states of the FSU had just assumed that Russia would never use its might against them. But the recent Georgian events had shown that &the Emperor has no clothes,⁸ i.e., Russia's past restraint was not because it could not act, but rather because it chose not to. In a seeming contradiction, he asserted that the Soviet Union had irreversibly fallen apart -- then predicted in the next breath that Northern Kazakhstan would soon be carved off by Russia in a way similar to Abkhazia and South Ossetia. The fault for this lay partially with the West, he thought, which had &let the (border redrawing) cat out of the bag⁸ by recognizing Kosovo despite a chorus of friends warning it not to. However, Imanaliyev predicted that the October 9 CIS summit in Bishkek would lead to little in the way of concrete political support for Russia. End Summary.

The Empire is collapsing, but expanding . . .

¶2. (C) Ambassador met with former Foreign Minister Muratbek Imanaliyev and former Education Minister Chinara Jakypova at the Institute for Public Policy, a think tank which they co-founded. Imanaliyev considered the current state of U.S.-Kyrgyz relations good, and regretted that Manas Air Base is popularly seen as an imposition of (or an opportunity to exploit) the Americans, and that few Kyrgyz leaders appreciate the base's role in protecting Kyrgyzstan's own national security. Supporting that point, Jakypova noted that a member of parliament had publicly requested the

government to use rent fees from Manas to lower domestic airfares.

¶3. (C) Imanaliyev was in the process of adjusting his thinking to the realities of the new, post-Georgia world. He predicted that Kyrgyzstan would continue its multi-vectoral foreign policy of balancing among the U.S., Russia, and other players in the region, and he claimed that Russian influence in Central Asia was weakening. For the years after independence, Imanaliyev said that the other states of the FSU had just assumed that Russia would never use its might against them. But the recent Georgian events had shown that &the Emperor has no clothes,⁸ i.e., Russia's past restraint was not because it could not act, but rather because it chose not to. In a seeming contradiction, he asserted that the Soviet Union had irreversibly fallen apart -- then predicted in the next breath that Northern Kazakhstan would soon be carved off by Russia in a way similar to Abkhazia and South Ossetia. The fault for this lay partially with the West, he thought, which had &let the (border redrawing) cat out of the bag⁸ by recognizing Kosovo despite a chorus of friends warning it not to.

Predictions for CIS

¶4. (C) Imanaliyev pointed to what he viewed as a positive outcome of the Dushanbe Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) summit: that the members had managed to avoid publicly taking sides in the Georgia conflict. He predicted that the CIS summit, the importance of which he otherwise dismissed, would follow the same pattern: The presidents would agree with Russia in tete-a-tetes in the hallways, but would manage

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to wiggle out of any forceful declaration of support. In an interesting side note, Jakypova claimed that a paper written by Imanaliyev was the deciding factor in the Kyrgyz government's decision not to recognize Ossetia and Abkhazia at the SCO meeting.

A cold and random winter

¶5. (C) Both Imanaliyev and Jakypova predicted significant but ultimately limited civil unrest this winter, primarily due to the unpredictability and unfairness of electricity cuts. Jakypova cited the example of her neighborhood the previous evening: According to the schedule, the entire neighborhood of about sixty houses was supposed to have power. (Note: The city of Bishkek has implemented rolling blackouts in an attempt to save electricity for the winter. See reftel. End Note.) But instead, electricity to half the neighborhood was unexpectedly cut off. Angry residents whose supper preparations had been interrupted spilled out onto the street, wondering to what apparatchik neighbor the lit half of the neighborhood owed their energy.

¶6. (C) Writ large, thousands of interrupted suppers and cold, dark nights could lead to unrest, but the scope of any protests will be limited by fear. Prior to the 2005 revolution, President Akayev publicly announced that he would not use force, and this weakness emboldened the protestors, according to Imanaliyev. President Bakayev has made no such mistake; on the contrary, he has announced that he will use force to maintain order. (Note: Bakayev has also reportedly staffed the Bishkek Police Department with recruits from Osh, renovated police barracks, and raised police salaries, seemingly to ensure the police know in which direction to point their weapons, should trouble arise. End Note.)

¶7. (C) Imanaliyev said that the Institute for Public Policy plans to convene a roundtable on water for Central Asia, which he hoped would begin the process of getting governments to think more carefully about how their interests could be advanced by negotiation with each other. Imanaliyev said

that the negotiating styles of the governments tend towards Soviet-style demands and ultimatums, which, as the recent impasse in tripartite water sharing talks in Almaty shows, is remarkably ineffective when dealing with sovereign states.

¶8. (C) Comment: Imanaliyev is one of Kyrgyzstan's most experienced diplomats and is widely respected here as an analyst of Kyrgyzstan's foreign policy. In private, Imanaliyev is often critical of the Bakiyev government and the lack of a "developed political culture" in Kyrgyzstan. His comments about Russia's actions in Georgia are reflective of the high degree of uncertainty here over the long-term implications for the Central Asia region.

GFOELLER